

Thank you, Madame Speaker. I rise in support of my amendment to H.R.1145, the “National Water Research and Development Initiative Act of 2009.” My amendment is critical to improving the health of many different types of water bodies, especially a treasured resource in my own district – Barnegat Bay. My amendment will task the interagency committee, established in this bill, with implementing a plan to develop technologies and practices that would treat eutrophic bodies of water, including estuaries.

The Barnegat Bay estuary covers over 42 miles of shoreline from the Point Pleasant Canal to Little Egg Harbor Inlet in Southern New Jersey. The flow of fresh water from rivers, creeks and groundwater into the Barnegat Bay produces the special conditions that are important for the survival of crabs, fish, birds, and other wildlife.

The eutrophication of Barnegat Bay is causing such environmentally detrimental consequences as the decline in fish populations, the decline of shellfish stocks, increased algae blooms, and loss of seagrass habitat. These problems are causing the deterioration of water quality, loss of biodiversity, and the disruption of ecosystem health and function.

The eutrophication of the Barnegat Bay estuary is also negatively impacting one of the most treasured pastimes of the residents of my district – fishing. The continued decline of the health of the bay has resulted in such a sharp decline in the bay’s fish population that it has detrimentally affected both recreational and commercial fishermen in my district. Fishing is a treasured family tradition for many residents of Ocean County, New Jersey, and for others, it is a source of their livelihood. Something must be done to improve the health of the bay while at the same time improving the economic and recreational pursuits of the people of my district.

Eutrophication is the process by which a body of water becomes eutrophic, typically as a result of mineral and organic runoff from the surrounding land. The increased growth of plants and algae that accompanies eutrophication depletes the dissolved oxygen content of the water and often causes a die-off of other organisms.

Barnegat Bay is one of 28 Congressionally-designated National Estuary Programs in the country, and it is in serious need of help. While the many estuaries in the country are diverse in their characteristics and the issues that they face, the most critical factor affecting many of them, and especially Barnegat Bay, is eutrophication.

I urge my colleagues to vote for my amendment and H.R. 1145.